

Unusual epidermal condition in a Golden Pheasant

by M. B. JONES

Received 23rd January, 1965

On 29th January, 1964, I received from the Cotswold Game Farm, Stroud, Gloucestershire, a female Golden Pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*) on which most of the skin of the ventral surface was crenated in a curious manner (see photo). The bird was in rather poor condition (410 gms.) with general appearance of having shrunk within its own skin owing to the loose folds formed by the many ridged yellowish crenations. On closer examination these ridges were seen to be the result of proliferations of the epidermis and extended from the lower throat, over the breast, belly and flanks to the vent, and over the ventral surface of each thigh. The affected areas were devoid of all feathers except the filoplumes. The rest of the skin was normally feathered.

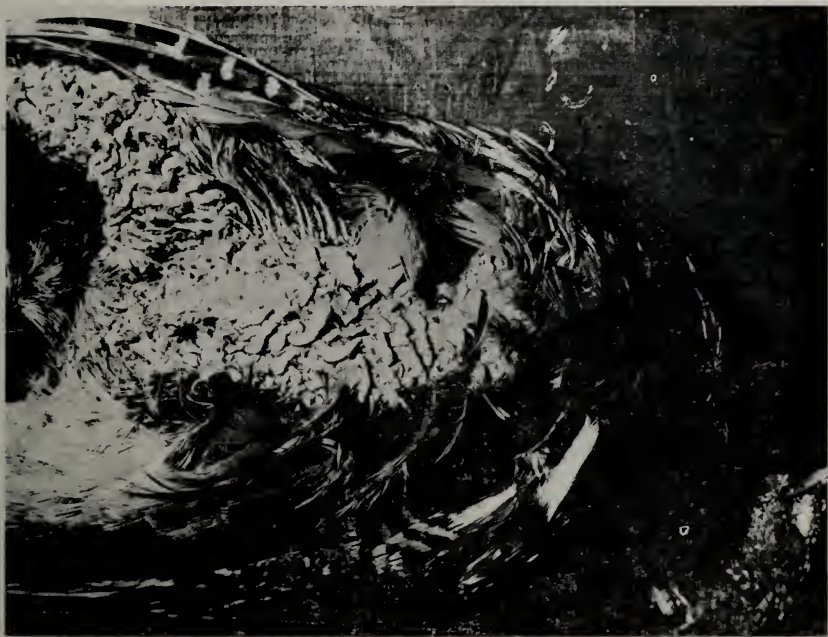


Photo: G. I. Sharpe

Unusual epidermal condition in a Golden Pheasant.

Apart from its fairly thin state the bird showed no evidence of any other concurrent disease. There was no evidence of mites externally. The specimen was passed to the Central Veterinary Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, at Weybridge, Surrey. The condition was unknown to them, and their main findings were as follows (E. Boughton pers. comm.)

“The condition did not resemble exudative diathesis (Creech, *et al.*, 1958) or skin leucosis either grossly or histologically. The distribution of lesions would tend to rule out a photosensitisation, and the lesions did

not appear to resemble epidermal staphylococcosis as described by Jungherr and Plastring (1941).

Sections of the skin showed subcutaneous inflammation, with infiltration by polymorphs and lymphocytes and a little oedema. The layer of keratinised cells was thicker than normal, and Gram-stained sections showed Gram-positive cocci (apparently short-chain Streptococci) in the loose outer layers. One or two yeast-like bodies were also seen, but sections stained by Grocott's method did not reveal fungal hyphae.

Bacterial cultures yielded heavy growths of anthracoids, *Staphylococcus albus* (coagulase negative, non-haemolytic) and *Streptococcus viridans*. Both the cocci could give rise to subcutaneous inflammation, but would probably not get a hold on healthy skin. Virus isolation was not attempted, there being no analogy and no indication of a possible type of virus.

The nearest approach to a similar condition to be found in the literature seems to be Xanthomatosis as described by Peckham (1955).

I am much indebted to Captain P. R. Symonds for the specimen, Dr. G. I. Sharpe for the photograph and to the staff of the Poultry Department of the Central Veterinary Laboratory for the results of their examinations, and particularly to Mr. E. Boughton for his helpful comments.

References:

- Creech, B. G., Rahman, M. M., Reid, B. L., and Couch, J. R. 1958. Exudative diathesis in chicks. *J. Nut.* 64 (1), p. 55.
Jungherr, E. and Plastring, W. N., (1941). Avian staphylococcosis. *J.A.V.M.A.* 98, p. 27.
Peckham, M. C., (1955). Xanthomatosis in chickens. *Am. J. Vet. Res.* XVI (61), p. 581.

On a variety of Swallow

by JAMES M. HARRISON

Received 25th February, 1955

On 16th September, 1964 in a strong south-westerly wind with heavy showers of rain, two immature Swallows, *Hirundo rustica rustica* Linnaeus, both females, were found dead under the telegraph wires in the Walland Marsh, Kent.

One of these, as can be seen from the plate, is of the creamy-breasted type, the next commonest colour phase (*fide* Vaurie, 1951.) to the pinkish-breasted bird in the British Isles. The other is of a warm buffy-brown on the under parts. Vaurie (*loc. cit.*) describes the colour of the British birds as pinkish, and in so far as the western mainland populations are concerned states that in the British Isles 13 were pinkish, 4 creamy and only 5 were whitish; in Sweden 1 was creamy and 6 white, while in north-western continental Europe 6 were pinkish, but less so than in the British Isles, 3 were creamy, 2 white, 1 as red as, or redder than *transitiva* from Palestine. Although the number of specimens quoted is not large, the findings suggest that the variation described is clinal in nature, and that the suffusion of the under parts from reddish, through pinkish to white runs on a south-east to north-west line.

This particular buffy-brown specimen, which is the subject of this note, is however, exceptional in that it shows symmetrical spotting on the breast though it does not show any suggestion of a nuchal band.